

MINUTES

**City of Oxford
Tree Board
Regular Meeting
Thursday, May 2, 2024, 11:00 am - 12:30 pm
City Hall Boardroom**



In Attendance

Allison Ferris; Benjamin Requet; Cowan Hunter; Ed Croom; Greg Pinion; Hollis Green; Hume Bryant; Mark Levy; Mary Hartwell Howorth

Not In Attendance

Jaclyn Colameta

Notice that certain aldermen or commissioners may be included in the meeting via teleconference, subject to the City of Oxford Code of Ordinances, Section 2-82.

1. Call to order.

Commissioner Cowan Hunter called the meeting to order at 11:05 AM.

2. Adopt the agenda for the meeting.

Commissioner Hunter moved to add Mari Kuhnle to the Business Section of the agenda, Item 4. Commissioner Hunter motioned to approved the addition. Commissioner Croom seconded; all aye. Commissioner Hunter motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Croom seconded; all aye.

3. Authorize the approval of the minutes for the March 2024 meetings.

Commissioner Hunter motioned to approve the March 2024 Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Mary Hartwell Howorth seconded ; all aye.

4. Departmental Issues and Reports:

- a. Buildings & Grounds Department

- i. Public assistance requests or inquiries

Greg Pinion, Building and Grounds Superintendent, reported on various requests his department received regarding possible hazardous trees due to recent storms. Greg noted most inquiries were on private property. Greg indicated that some private property trees did fall into the road that had to be removed, but he indicated City trees were not impacted. Commissioner Hunter discussed providing his neighbors with recommendations for local tree professionals. Greg reported there was a tree behind Cedar Oaks that had to be removed.

- ii. Update regarding Tyler Avenue Specimen Tree Evaluation

Matt Nielson, Green Grove Arborist, highlighted his recent report regarding the Black Walnut specimen tree on Tyler Avenue. Matt reported on the continued decline, but noted the tree was alive and producing leaves. Matt discussed necessary measures to help retain the tree and indicated he gave the tree a "moderate risk" rating. Matt also discussed ways to lower the risk i.e. pruning. Commissioner Hume Bryant inquired regarding the potential construction in the area i.e. potential demolition of a building, construction within City parking lot. Commissioner Hunter inquired regarding First Presbyterian Church's view of the tree. There was discussion. Matt indicated that questions would be for the church leadership. There was further discussion regarding the

process for reaching out the church leadership and staff. Commissioner Hunter recommended Greg Pinion reach out to the church leadership. Commissioner Hunter summarized the designation of "specimen tree" i.e. require permission from the Tree Board to remove/cut, even those on private property.

iii. Recent weather damage or removals

See public assistance requests or inquires section.

b. Development Services-Planning Department

i. Status of G & M Pharmacy Revocable License

Ben Requet, Director of Planning, summarized his multiple conversations with the owner of G & M Pharmacy regarding the sign issue and need to re-locate it. Ben noted the Engineering Department would be presenting the revocable license for the sign to be on City Right of Way to the Board of Alderman at the next meeting.

ii. Update regarding current/pending development project tree issues.

Ben discussed tree damage that caused the demolition of a home at Williams and Douglas. Ben discussed two larger residential related developments that would involve tree mitigation, The Edison, to be located on Hwy 30, and Bella Vita, to be located on South Lamar.

c. General Government-Special Projects Department

i. Update regarding Police Station and Oxford Park Commission Pool Projects

Mark Levy, Director of Special Projects, reminded the Tree Board about the upcoming Oxford Park Commission Pool Project as well as discussed the site-plan process as it relates to the tree ordinances. Mark discussed the need to apply for a variance i.e. spacing issues, necessary location of trees due to unique location of the project. Mark indicated the site-plan for the project would go before the Planning Commission as well as the Board of Alderman. There was further discussion.

Mark indicated the Police Station project is moving forward and would involve tree mitigation.

ii. Discuss Timeframe and Scope for Reassessment of Projects

Commissioner Hunter expressed the desire for Mark and Greg to find a time during the summer for the reassessment and possible re-planting needs for previous projects. Greg indicated that Ed Perry was in good shape. There was further discussion. Greg and Mark indicated they would find a time to meet regarding the reassessments.

5. Consider new business:

a. Recap and Discussion of April Ole Miss Big Event Participation

Commissioner Hunter discussed the Ole Miss Big Event participation in April at the dog park near the Animal Resource Center. Commissioner Hunter indicated the students were eager and helpful and they were able to place mulch at the different needed areas in the dog park.

b. Discuss changes needed in managing documents presented at meeting

Commissioner Hunter briefly discussed managing documents presented at meetings.

c. Mississippi Forestry Commission Updates Regarding Grants and Canopy Study

Alex Ballard, Mississippi Forestry Commission, discussed his new role with Forestry Commission. Alex highlighted and summarized the recent canopy study for the City of Oxford, MS. Alex indicated a 57.9% tree canopy for the City of Oxford, which he indicated was great and good numbers. Alex discussed positive results from the study. There was

discussion and Commissioner Hunter summarized periodic conduction of canopy studies through partnering with the state of Mississippi to utilize programs i.e. Tree Plotter. Commissioner Hunter indicated the recent study indicates Oxford as a whole is in good shape. There was further discussion. Alex discussed his work the Professional Arborist Association of Mississippi i.e. helping increase workshops for arborist as well as municipality staffs etc. Matt Nielson summarized the Tree Plotter software i.e. tree inventory system, and he discussed a future webinar training. Matt reiterated he believed the recent tree canopy study was accurate as well as excluded the aspects of The University of Mississippi that are not within the City limits. Greg inquired with Alex about Tree Plotter capabilities in relation to canopy studies. There was further discussion. Ben discussed impacts of annexation in relation to the tree canopy.

d. Mari Kuhnle

Mari Kuhnle, Citizen of Oxford, came to Tree Board meeting to discuss her concerns in regarding changes in Oxford in relation to tree canopy. Mari thanked the Tree Board for their concern for Tree Canopy as well as working with the City of Oxford regarding tree canopy. Mari indicated she would like an analysis of the current tree canopy study conducted. Mari expressed concerns in relation to developments as well as discussed her concerns conveyed to the Mayor. Mari discussed the benefits of trees. Mari indicated a desire to help the Tree Board in relation to tree ordinances. Mari inquired with the Tree Board about the Tree Escrow Fund and Commissioner Hunter directed her to the Land Development Code. Commissioner Hunter also discussed how the recent canopy study showed Oxford is in a relatively healthy place. There was further discussion regarding Mari's concerns in relation to tree mitigation and how to address concerns. The Tree Board expressed appreciation for interest and concern.

6. Adjourn.

Commissioner Hunter moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:14 PM, Commissioner Croom seconded; all aye.

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